



# CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

## COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**AGENDA DATE:** July 1, 2008  
**TO:** Mayor and Councilmembers  
**FROM:** Planning Division, Community Development Department  
**SUBJECT:** *Plan Santa Barbara* Status Report

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Council provide feedback on the *Plan Santa Barbara* process.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The *Plan Santa Barbara* (*PlanSB*) process to update the General Plan is now in the policy development phase. On February 26, 2008, staff provided a status report to the Council, and Council authorized a contract for the environmental review of *PlanSB*. The City Council, Planning Commission, Boards and Commissions, and community members have been very involved in the *PlanSB* process. Status reports are important to maintain momentum with Council direction.

This report will cover the recent Development Trends Planning Commission worksession and community workshops; the approach to the Policy Options report, workshops and developing a Preferred Policy recommendation; information on outreach efforts; and address Council direction to have the Ordinance Committee consider the need, scope and timing of a potential interim ordinance.

### **DISCUSSION:**

#### **Development Trends**

In April, Staff released a Development Trends Report, and the Planning Commission held a special worksession to review and consider the quantity, location and type of recent development activity. This report provided a framework to consider how existing policies, programs and development trends implement General Plan goals.

The topics raised in this report were discussed by the community in two public workshops. Small group discussions focusing on 22 key questions related to the primary issues of land use/growth management, community character, housing, and transportation were conducted. The workshops provided valuable community input as

to what range of future growth should be studied, what types of uses should be encouraged or discouraged, and where future development should be located.

Most significantly, the public confirmed three overarching objectives for the *PlanSB* process:

1. A range of growth options should be studied for both non-residential and residential development, and that any new growth over the next 20 years must be managed;
2. All growth and redevelopment must be sustainable; and
3. Future growth should clearly meet the community needs, and certain (if not all) types of new growth must provide some degree of community benefit.

To date, Santa Barbara has managed growth by regulating and monitoring non-residential development (e.g., commercial, industrial, office, government, etc.), and has supported a variety of residential development. At the workshops, the City proposed an incremental range of growth to study for both types of development. Workshop participants preferred that the City should analyze no more than three million square feet of non-residential growth over the next 20 years, and that the number of residential units to be studied should not exceed the current zoning capacity of 47,000 units.

A summary of the two April workshops, which also highlights comments related to sustainability and community benefits, can be found on the [YouPlanSB.org](http://YouPlanSB.org) website.

### **Policy Options Report and Next Steps**

As the concept of sustainability has been embraced by the Council and the community (and underscored during the April workshops), the Policy Options report will set forth a draft Sustainability definition and set of Principles specific to Santa Barbara. These Principles can then serve as a guide for the development of new goals, policies and action items designed to further the community towards a more sustainable future.

The policy topics to be covered in the report will include: Land Use/Growth Management; Housing; Transportation; Community Character; Resources, Energy and Climate Change; and Economic and Fiscal Health. The next set of workshops will examine what sustainability means for Santa Barbara, and what set of Policy Options can best advance the community towards that sustainable future. These workshops are scheduled for July 17 and 23 at the Faulkner Gallery.

Based on the outcome of the workshops, a set of Preferred Policy Options will be drafted for review and recommendation by the Planning Commission to the Council this fall. The Council will then review the recommended policies and direct staff, with any requisite changes, to initiate the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The EIR will

assess both the quantitative growth numbers and the preferred policy options together, which will formally constitute the EIR Project Description and Alternatives. See the attachment for a schedule of upcoming milestones.

### **Outreach Efforts**

Besides the April workshops and those upcoming in July, there are other outreach efforts underway:

- Over the last four months a **Youth Survey** of high school students (designed and administered by the students) was conducted to gain insight into their thoughts about the future of Santa Barbara. The results of this survey will be available later this month.
- At the direction of Council, staff released an RFP for a **Poll/Survey** to assess the Preferred Policy Options. Staff will bring a contract for this effort to the Council next month and the survey will be conducted later this summer.
- Over the last few months, **Channel 18** has been producing a monthly segment on *PlanSB* for the regular *Inside Santa Barbara* program. In addition, a special two-part *PlanSB* series will begin airing in July, just prior to the workshops. The second segment of the series will be a moderated discussion in the “Washington Week” format that will include two Outreach Committee members.
- The **Outreach Committee** met prior to the last series of workshops, and has regularly attended all of the workshops.
- The **YouPlanSB.org** website continues to evolve and will play a greater outreach role during the upcoming Channel 18 series and the July workshops.

### **Council Ordinance Committee**

The issue of large and tall buildings is certainly important in *PlanSB* and was a principal issue discussed in the community workshops. In response to the recent developments, several members of the community began initiative drives to amend the City Charter to lower the maximum building height. Based on staff experience and what we learned from the public input in the recent workshops, it appears that public opinion on the issue of building height is quite varied.

There is agreement that community character and building heights are important, yet after that there is a range of opinion including: the Charter should not be changed; 60 feet is not appropriate everywhere that it is now allowed—consider changes to address historic structures and surrounding neighborhoods; and reduce heights to 40 feet. Clearly, more public dialogue and understanding of the building height issue and how it relates to a larger sustainable community vision is needed. Appropriately, the effects of

maintaining or changing building heights will be thoroughly discussed in the next round of *PlanSB* workshops and analyzed in the EIR.

On April 22, 2008, Council requested that the Ordinance Committee consider a potential interim ordinance as a timely response to the community to provide direction on what should be further studied in the EIR. Such an interim ordinance could address issues concerning building heights, open space, setbacks as well as the size and number of units for projects in the pipeline while the *PlanSB* process is underway.

A new ordinance to establish project review criteria for the Design Review process, has been reviewed by the Architectural Board of Review, Historic Landmarks Commission and Ordinance Committee. All parties involved believe that it will be extremely valuable and will assist the City in achieving better projects. A draft ordinance will be before the Ordinance Committee in a few weeks and could be adopted by Council later this summer.

Ordinance Committee discussion of an interim ordinance concerning building heights, open space, setbacks as well as the size and number of units for projects could follow. Staff understands that should Council wish to adopt an interim ordinance, the schedule for review and adoption could involve priority adjustments to ensure that the Council can act in a timely fashion (i.e., at the time the Council formally initiates the *PlanSB* project description for the EIR).

**ATTACHMENT:** Plan Santa Barbara Milestones

**PREPARED BY:** Bettie Weiss, City Planner  
John Ledbetter, Principal Planner

**SUBMITTED BY:** Paul Casey, Community Development Department Director

**APPROVED BY:** City Administrator's Office